What is the link between explaining society and criticizing it? This book is about developing a new answer to this question in the context of social theory strongly committed to democracy and the progressive Left. The answer that it proposes, however, is at considerable odds with the answers that frame most leftist social criticism. We propose that both criticism and explanation should be done “from the inside out”—which is to say, they should focus on the interpretation of meaning. The link between explaining society and criticizing it is thus a strongly hermeneutic one. Here, I want to sketch out what this means, in the generalized terms of contemporary social theory.

Because skepticism toward the status quo is one of the essential responsibilities of critical intellectuals, the trope of irony—“they know not what they do”—has always been an element of progressive criticism. Toward whom this irony is pointed has been a constant question (part of the answer, always, is toward ourselves). But the basis for this irony has not always been conceived as tropological—that is, as an operation of discourse with certain capacities for understanding social life and for communicating this understanding to others. Instead, it has been conceived as based in objective and certain knowledge of
social reality. This has led to a certain brand of overcertainty that, conditioned by causal determinism and historical teleology, articulates calls for social change from on high.

The most obvious way in which this is so is in sociological positivism and its accompanying critical figure, the government adviser. In this conception of criticism, the bulk of the work involved lies in the scientific assessment of social life in terms that, because they are quantitative, are neutral, and because they are neutral, are communicable. It is then the responsibility of the government (i.e., the modern state, entrusted with the power to make and enforce laws and to distribute tax revenue) to accept the rational advice of the experts and implement subtle or not-so-subtle changes in society.

The capacity of this kind of criticism to create change for the good should not be underestimated. Still, sociologists with a broader theoretical agenda are likely to find it wanting. For one of the most active meanings of the term critical intellectual is the sense that intellectuals have the ability to think beyond the current constellation of government programs—indeed, to think critically about the relationship of intellectuals to the government, and historically about the shifting relationship of governments to their people. Furthermore, in the last forty years, even liberal intellectuals have become skeptical about the social effects of rational, neutral, and expert knowledge, to the point where one can without blinking put these three terms inside scare quotes.

In the twentieth century, there was another place to go for progressive thinkers who wanted a broader perspective, a more dramatic historical narrative, and an expanded critical capacity: Marxism and its epistemological umbrella, historical materialism. From this perspective, the supposed objectivity of positivism (and its liberal adherents) was a mirage, a piece of bourgeois ideology that naturalized the in fact quite constructed and historically contingent categories of capitalist society into a “second nature” (Lukács 1972). Instead, Marxism proposed to get underneath the surface equations of bourgeois economics and the quasi-guarantees of liberal rights discourse to discover the essential mechanisms of social oppression and historical change—and thus also of social liberation. Then the critic could align her pen with the actions of the revolutionary classes, and both could align their agency with objective historical trends.

This, too, has been an incredibly productive basis for criticism. It forced even the most “literary” intellectuals to take account of society and politics, dismissed naïve liberal individualist metaphysics, and denied the naturalization of the given that made positivist research tend toward a sociology of and for the status quo. And though the progressive Left has long since distanced itself from actually existing socialism and given up on the proletariat as the subject-object of history, the operations of unveiling and debunking that go by the name of ideology critique remain central to its task. Operations of social power are, particularly in open societies, always accompanied by claims that what is actually operating is equality, the voice of the people, and so on. Criticism of the falsity, partiality, or nefarious effects of these claims remains the central task of debunking. The post-Marxist critical theories that have emerged since the 1960s have elaborated this task into an endless sequence of compelling and complex theories of ideology and hegemony (Eagleton 1991; Žižek 1989; Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

Yet a problem remains. Stripped of the socialist utopia, and prone to doubt the universalizing claims of liberal democracies, the operation of ideology critique has had increasing trouble articulating its alternative concept of the good society (see Eliaziorn, this volume). A statement to this effect is of course itself contestable, controversial, and perhaps ideological—and points to the intellectual problem of the uses and abuses of utopia in the twenty-first century. Here, however, I want to point out that it was not only a conception of utopia that originally drove ideology critique, but also a specific explanatory schema that made the exploitation of labor and the class struggle the centerpiece of an objective theory of society. And, while the system(s) of oppression that critical sociologists are prone to identify has certainly expanded beyond the exploitation of labor, the epistemic maneuver of basing social critique in objectivist explanation has remained in place. This reliance on an objective theory of society and history has often motivated the Left’s suspicion and rejection of other forms of discourse and interpretation.2 And so, though most of our critical theories today have distanced themselves from the idea of a universal science of the social, they have not given up on the sheen of certainty that originally accompanied scientific Marxism, and naturalist social science more generally.

What ultimately connected these two bases—utopia and objective knowledge—for ideology critique? We should know from the philosophical tradition that facts and values are not always so easily sewn together. What assured, for example, that the political practice advised by Marxist interpretations of utopia aligned with the objective position of revolutionary agents in the social structure? In the Marxist synthesis, the glue in this regard was the Hegelian philosophy of history, the “cunning of reason.” The progressive unfolding of historically necessary stages, which in Marxism was conceived as the material dialectic of reason, gave the objective analysis of social structure the dynamic direction it needed to connect up to the communist utopia.
of the future and the positive notions of freedom it entailed. This, in
turn, allowed the articulators of this utopia (the critical intellectuals)
to identify with, align themselves with, and help mold certain real
social actors, structural tendencies, or collective social movements.

It is worth noting that, in a broad sense, liberal positivism
had a teleological metanarrative, or philosophy of history, as well:
modernization theory. That narrative linked the scientific approach
to society with the utopia of a "modern" society that was, to quote
intellectual historian Nils Gilman, "cosmopolitan, mobile, controlling
of the environment, secular, welcoming of change, and characterized
by a complex division of labor." Gilman continues:

The certainty that history was on their side pervaded everything the
modernization theorists wrote and thought, which helps explain
why modernization theory would be so useful to policy makers
groping for an explanation of the United States' place and responsi-
bilities amid the uncertainties of the postwar world. . . . More
than just a system for explaining the world in a rational fashion,
modernization theory constituted a metalevel that supplied not
only a sense of the "meaning" of postwar geopolitical uncertain-
ties, but also an implicit set of directives for how to effect positive
change in that dissident world. (Gilman 2003, 5)

Of course, the range of positivist social science exceeds the specific
theories of modernization that are now so routinely despised; the same
could be said of historical materialism and Marxism proper. The point
here is that these perspectives on the future good society and how to
get there are dependent on certain epistemic presuppositions.

So, there are in fact three points of origin for critical thinking.
both liberal and radical: objective explanation (positivism or historical
materialism), utopia (socially engineered modernity or socialism), and
the narrative that links the two of them together (modernization, dia-
technical teleology). The latter two—utopias and the master narratives
that told us how we were going to arrive there—have been significantly
criticized in the last forty years. Cultural sociology, however, is based
in a criticism of the first point of origin.

**Reason and Its Discontents**

The utopias imagined by Western intellectuals, and the historical
narratives of their advent, came under attack inside the Left in the
1970s and 1980s. Postmodernism and poststructuralism were deeply
skeptical toward these claims of "Western reason." This resulted in a
massive reorientation of the Western tradition of democratic thought.
David Couzens Hoy (2004) has called this form of discourse post-
critique. In my view, it has two intertwined strands: a suspicion of
totalizing and foundational theories and an attempt to think outside
of modernity.

The first aspect, the distrust of totality, is also the source of
"incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984) and the severe
skepticism about the possibility of progress. It turns the discourse
of critical rationalism in on itself, as the big theories of reason, truth, and
human action that were so long the fount of critique—Kant, Marx,
Freud—are interrogated for their duplicity and complicity with social
power. As a result, post-critique concludes, social criticism must be
fragmentary and partial in its sources (e.g., the new social movements)
and self-limiting in its aims (e.g., its avoidance of prescriptive utopias).
In this model, critique works at the interstices of power/knowledge.
Armed with the insights of Foucault, the deconstructive methods of
Derrida, and concepts like hybridity (Bhabha 1994) and agonistic
politics (Mouffe 2000), critical intellectuals are to reappropriate cer-
tain forms of speech and social space from the control of capital, the
state, or hegemonic discourse, and carefully avoid making claims to
rationality that are claims to cultural superiority in disguise.

But the turn to post-critique is not only a turning-in. The
radical critique of Western reason's utopias and narratives also derives
concepts and perspectives from the experience of colonized peoples
and the anticolonial liberation movements. Postcolonial theory in-
verts the anthropological gaze of the West, proposing as a method
an anthropology of modernity, where the utopias and narratives of
"Western reason" are examined as a critical anthropologist would re-
gard a "strange" society's myths. Western societies that claim to have
achieved objectivity in scientific knowledge, democracy in collective
will formation, and progress in bringing "civilization" to other parts
of the globe are looked at askance, with the guiding sense that these
stories are most likely tools with which the powerful dominate others,
internal or external.

The narratives and utopias of the enlightenment have their de-
defenders. Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, and others have insisted,
pace the postmodern turn, that the possibilities for radical critique,
democratic inclusion, and global justice ultimately rest on a universal
concept of reason (Habermas 1987a, 1987b, 1992, 1998; Benhabib
1992, 1996, 2002; see the debate in Benhabib et al. 1995). In the
spirit of the dialogic model they insist on, this school of critical
thory has deeply revised and refashioned the central concepts of
the Enlightenment and modernity. Rejecting a unitary subject and simple evolutionism, post-Habermasian critical theory has instead developed a nuanced sense of the validity claims inherent in human speech, and a historical understanding of the democratic potential of law and the public sphere.

The result of all of this, then, is in an ongoing debate about what can and should animate the normative theory of the progressive Left. This is often glossed as an argument between “Habermas” and “Foucault,” or between the Enlightenment and its discontents, despite Foucault’s call to avoid what he called the “blackmail of the enlightenment” (Foucault 1984, 42–43). As a result, the possibility of progress (narrative) and the utility of the imaginative (utopia) have become central topics of intellectual debate.

Yet the project of radical criticism today has not fully interrogated or reformed the first basis for its critical stance: the mechanistic explanation of social behavior and historical change. Generally, in these discussions, the objective structures of oppression are known and assumed by all (well, all on the left …), and the question that remains is how to theorize their resistance. This assumption is the ongoing basis for the missing interpretive revolution in the sociological side of social criticism. The problem is not so much the recognition or misrecognition of oppression and inequality but their naturalistic explanation.

Where does this naturalism come from? The semiautonomous and interdisciplinary discourse of critical theory has certainly done enough to distance itself from positivist social science. I suggest that it is the result of a certain view of modernity, inherited from Weber—or, more precisely, from certain readings of Weber. Many sociologists recognize in Foucault an extension of Weber’s work on rationalization (e.g., Gorski 2003), while Habermas, of course, built his sociological edifice explicitly on an interpretation of exactly the same part of Weber’s work (Habermas 1985). On both sides of the Habermas-Foucault debate, modernity is disenchanted, and thus the workings of the social in modernity are the workings of rational strategy, determinist mechanisms, and other processes that can be theorized through a variety of naturalistic metaphors. What is to be explained, in modern societies and the contemporary world system, is exactly that which excludes, avoids, or denies meaning: the colonization of the lifeworld, the normalization of populations, and so on.

Yet a different interpretation of Weber (Geertz 2000; Alexander 1989) would suggest that, even inside modernity (and beyond), actors are caught up in “webs of significance” (Geertz 2000, 5). If this is so, the explanation of social action must always involve the interpretation of the meanings that construe experience and thus motivate individuals to act in the first place. (Foucault’s early work—on the experience of madness and illness—implicitly takes up this alternative Weberian perspective.) I believe that the newer discourses of poststructural and postcolonial theory implicitly recognize this, even if they continue to distrust depth hermeneutics and other aspects of the interpretive tradition. If we are now both anthropologists of the modern and careful listeners to the voice of the other, then we should admit also that the central explanatory basis for critique is socially meaningful experience and the actions it motivates. Only then can we reflexively account for the variety of critical perspectives that have emerged in the last forty years, constituting the productive, pluralistic, and agonistic field that is critical theory today. And, most important, we must see that the social processes of modernity are not exempt from the problems of the hermeneutic circle. This has important consequences for how we construct critical theory and articulate social criticism.

**Criticism as Interpretation**

Thus far I have argued that the progressive criticism of society has three points of origin: the explanation of social conditions, the articulation of social ideals, and the narration of how to get from the former to the latter. In leftist discourse, the latter two have been productively problematized. The possibility of social explanation, and the manner in which it should be accomplished, has been disputed throughout sociology’s history as a “science.” But the interpretive research that has emerged since the “cultural turn” and the “historical turn” poses with new urgency the question of how one approaches and explains social reality. And this, in turn, raises the issue of the consequences of this interpretive approach to social reality for the discourses of idealization and progress. What would criticism look like if its corresponding explanatory procedure were centered on the reconstruction of social meaning?

If we are willing to temporarily shift genres of discourse slightly, we can get an initial sense of the answer to this question in Michael Walzer’s reflections on moral philosophy. This will help us frame the essays in this book, in which this question is answered in practice.

In *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, Walzer distinguishes three “ways of doing moral philosophy” (Walzer 1987, 3), which lead, in turn, to different tropes of social criticism: the path of discovery, the path of invention, and the path of interpretation. The path of discovery
social criticism is superior—more likely to be plausible, effective, and to avoid resorting to violence and authoritarianism. It is, he argues, more democratic in the sense of being anti-idealistic—based in the lifeworld and concerns of people as opposed to high-minded and abstract systems—and nonetheless always able to achieve a critical perspective “from within.” On the other hand, Walzer holds that “discovery” and “invention” are themselves forms of interpretation. “Perhaps we should search for, or invent, a better morality,” he writes. “But if we follow the course of the argument [of discoverers or inventors], listen to it, study its phenomenology, we will see that its real subject is the meaning of the particular moral life shared by the protagonists” (Walzer 1987, 22–23).

As a philosophical basis for criticism, Walzer’s position has been the subject of extensive, and public, debate (e.g., Walzer and Dworkin 1983). The most immediate question that comes to mind is: How is one to define the boundaries of the social group whose life one is interpreting critically? This throws us directly back into the question of the philosophical basis for social criticism. But now we are armed with a new idea. For Walzer has suggested that social criticism, as itself a way of assigning meaning to the world (by comprehending and evaluating social life and social practice), might be related internally to the meanings applied to social life by everyday actors in their everyday operations. The way Walzer proposes to do criticism—regardless of his understanding of its philosophical foundations—coincides with the way cultural sociology proposes to explain social action. Together, they suggest that the basis for both explanation and criticism might be hermeneutic.

The shifts in normative theory that I described earlier—the move to post-critique—have also suggested that the role of interpretation is crucial in setting normative agendas, communicating critical accounts of society, and reflexively understanding the limits of normative argument. They have added an element of contingency to the process of building a critical artifice, and they have suggested that criticism might derive more from the fissures in Western reason than from its foundations. But they have been less attuned to the philosophical reason to consider criticism as a form of interpretation: critique is best thought of as interpretation because the explanation of social action is. Both the explanation of action à la Weber and the criticism of social practice have a responsibility to consider cultural context. What would we conclude if we thought of critique in the context of cultural explanation, and cultural explanation in the context of critique? Each of the essays in this book addresses this question in its own unique way. Here I want only to mention how thinking about
knowledge sociologically and hermeneutically implies a perspective on critique that is neither disembodied and abstract nor irrevocably local.

The method of immanent critique cuts across the modernist/postmodernist divide, because it can consider both modernity and its discontents as forms of meaningful life, and it thus can reconstruct both universal and particular principles as the basis for critique—as long as they can be reconstructed with reference to meaning "on the ground." As a mode of criticism, it originates in Hegel and thus is often associated with the idea that specific communities and cultures contain the potential for universal reason within their own "local" dynamics—a very Habermasian idea. On the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman has insisted that it is exactly to the degree that intellectuals take up the position of "interpreters" rather than "legislators" that they become postmodern, and that this position of interpretation has as its central axiom the respect for local practices:

The typically post-modern view of the world is, in principle, one of an unlimited number of models of order, each one generated by a relatively autonomous set of practices. Order does not precede practices and hence cannot serve as an outside measure of their validity... In each case, validation brings in criteria which are developed within a particular tradition; they are upheld by the habits and beliefs of a "community of meaning" and admit of no other tests of legitimacy. Criteria described... as "typically modern" are not exceptions to this general rule; they are ultimately validated by one of the many possible "local traditions." (Bauman 1987, 4)

This is perhaps the most extreme version of "local" normative theory. The question that any sociology brings to this position (as Bauman himself recognizes) is, What are the dynamics of communication between different "traditions"? More generally, we can see that the idea of critique as interpretation is, at its root, a sociologically informed methodology of critique, rather than a single normative position. It is exactly in this regard that cultural sociology and critique are linked, as the chapters of this book will show.

THE VIEW FROM SOMEWHERE

The revision and reinvigoration of democratic theory that have come from feminism, critical race theory, queer theory, and other movements within the Left over the last forty years have been criticized as narrow, relativist, essentialist, and even on occasion nihilist. But from a cultural sociological perspective, it should be clear that ideas about knowledge and the social that originate from a structural situation of oppression, and the social experiences such a situation entails, are not destined to stay there. The act of criticism—of speaking truth to power, representing the underrepresented, speaking in the voice of the other—is not determined by a position in the social structure but rather enabled by certain positions in the social structure, then made available to many through various forms of communication, and thus codified into a cultural context for action. Like many cultural forms, these amendments to "democratic thought" have followed a Durkheimian path, according to which symbolic formations that originate from certain points in the social structure (or what Durkheim called the "morphological base") take on a life of their own. Having been generated by certain experiences of the social (of women, of the colonized, of oppressed races and sexual orientations), these perspectives produce a "whole world of feelings, ideas, and images that follow their own laws once they are born. They mutually attract one another, repel one another, fuse together, subdivide, and proliferate; and none of these combinations is directly commanded and necessitated by the state of the underlying reality" (Durkheim 1995, 426). And indeed, the discourses of high Western political theory have been infiltrated, reformed, revised, and revolutionized by the new developments in normative theory. I would also make the further claim that these discourses make up part of the cultural environment of action of practicing sociologists. How is this so?

It is true that the concepts of cultural sociology explicitly designed for empirical use—genre, narrative, trope, code, signified and signifier, and so on—are, like the term culture itself, used with Marshall Sahlins's dictum in mind: cultural relativism is a methodological principle, no more, no less (Sahlins 2002, 46). They are expected to cut across the key distinctions of political philosophy (rational/irrational; democratic/authoritarian; Enlightened/unenlightened) to render all kinds of social action explainable: why people voted for Hitler and how nations decide to go to war; the careful economics and obscene violence of drug dealers; who does the second shift and what women expect from men. Though cultural sociologists may take a particular amount of delight in showing that economic rationality does not explain anything and everything, since Weber, the very origins of and conditions of possibility for 

zweckrationalität have been a central
sociological question and one to which cultural analysis has worked to find an answer. Suspicious toward rational accounts of action that pretend to foundational status, and insistent that the most strategic and even the most heuristic actions require understanding to explain them, cultural sociology has resisted both instrumental and normative rationality as foundational ontologies for human life. As Sahlin writes, “different cultures, different rationalities” (Sahlin 1995, 14).

Yet it would be naive to mistake this adventure beyond the confines of concepts of rationality for a merely empirical advance or even an analytic principle. For while the operational concepts of cultural sociology are consciously designed to work as devices for explaining another set of actions, they also open up action to evaluation by laying bare the meaning-world in which actions occur and the internal motivations of actors themselves. In this regard, cultural sociologists themselves exist in a relationship—conscious or unconscious—to the discursive tradition of evaluation and democratic critique. The deepest empirical insight of poststructuralist criticism has been the insidious and nefarious ways in which discourse can work to reinforce unequal social relations, and its greatest normative contribution has been the development of a set of discursive tools for identifying, evaluating, and criticizing these workings. Insofar as cultural sociology explains by identifying deep discursive structures and their institutionalization, then it works in affinity with this tradition of thought, and can be informed by it.

Thus, though cultural sociology adamantly resists the explanation of social action through the classic, Hobbesian discourse of suspicion—that people are power-hungry and endlessly strategic—it works, nonetheless, within another, alternate discourse of suspicion that has normative implications. The constant suspicion of cultural sociology is that actors are never fully in command of their own voices. Every speech act, no matter how carefully articulated or listened to, no matter how authentically reconstructed, has connotations that the actor can neither know nor control. This is why Ricoeur compared action to a text, since acts, once committed, escape the interpretation of their authors (Ricoeur 1981). In tracking down these unintended meanings and showing how, as a background for and an environment of action, they explain the flow of social life, cultural sociology denaturalizes the social. The application of these techniques of denaturalization to the processes that enable or prohibit democratic practice, therefore, always suggests how social life could be otherwise. Thus, cultural sociology has both the potential and responsibility to contribute to democratic theory.

Chapter Summaries

I hope to have supplied a general theoretical frame for the common question of the essays in this book—namely, what is the nature of the link between cultural sociology and critical theory? Each of the following chapters takes up consciously and reflexively “democratic thought” as a cultural environment for intellectual action and thus articulates a meeting point between the interpretive explanation and interpretive criticism.

In “Invitation to a Practical Cultural Sociology,” Paul Lichterman expands the intellectual project of cultural sociology by asking a set of empirical questions that speak simultaneously to the sociological imagination and to democratic theory broadly understood. Adapting several pragmatist insights from John Dewey and Jane Adams, he argues that sociology must address the “cultural conditions of possibility for a shared, democratic life.” Using examples from his most recent ethnographic work, he works in and through the content of practical, democratic communication and community problem solving to develop a cultural sociological approach to the central problems of democratic publics, the relationship between theory and practice, and the meaning of “social capital.” His theoretical innovation, the concept of “flexible communication,” is a clear and distinct alternative to Putnam’s theory, and it exemplifies the possible double valence—empirical and normative—of cultural-sociological concepts.

Nina Eliasoph’s “Beyond the Politics of Denunciation: Cultural Sociology as the Sociology for the Meantime” complements Lichterman’s essay by bringing the tools and perspectives of cultural sociology to bear (in full force) on the styles and instincts of leftist criticism. In particular, she carries out a trenchant critique of the narrowness of leftist sensibilities, through an elaboration of two central findings of cultural sociology: that social inertia and powerful institutions are best thought of as highly sedimented meanings, and that people’s politics emerge from, and interact with, their meaningful lifeworlds. Using examples from her forthcoming book on “mixed institutions” and activists who work “within the system,” she articulates the way in which “praxis” is fundamentally an effort of communication and as such must be attuned to the meanings that structure everyday life.

In “From Mass to Public: Rethinking the Value of the Culture Industry,” Ronald Jacobs reconsiders the role of popular culture in everyday life and its consequences for a vibrant public and democratic practice. He begins with a critique, not only of the older, Frankfurt
Germany, quiescence about domestic abuse) are maintained—from a Simmelian formalist perspective. A fascinating set of counterintuitive theorems emerge: conspiracies of silence—unlike "normal" secrets—are more powerful and harder to break the more people are involved and the more publicly known they are. Furthermore, one of the most intensely guarded secrets is the "metasecret" (i.e., the denial that a denial is taking place).

NOTES

1. Karl Popper, in direct opposition to Marxism and what he more generally called "historicism," proposed a theoretically sophisticated version of this he called "piecemeal technology" (Popper 2002, 53). Insisting on the unity of the sciences, he proposed that sociology and programs for social change should be "force[d] ... to submit ... theories to definite standards, such as standards of clarity and practical testability" (54). "Piecemeal social engineering" remains silent with regard to the ends to which it is put, but it is actively interventionist in its willingness to "tinker" with social institutions. As opposed to the "utopian engineer," writes Popper:

The characteristic approach of the piecemeal engineer is this. Even though he may perhaps cherish some ideals which concern society as a whole—it's general welfare, perhaps—he does not believe in the method of redesigning it as a whole. Whatever its ends, he tries to achieve them by small adjustments and readjustments which can be continually improved upon. The piecemeal engineer knows, like Socrates, how little he knows... he will avoid undertaking reforms of a complexity and scope which make it impossible for him to disentangle causes and effects, and to know what he is really doing. (61)

2. For Habermas, for example, it was the inability of hermeneutics to accommodate the explanatory arm of Marxism that damned its "claim to universality."

Only an accompanying theory of political economy could enable the "critique of systematically distorted communication" (Habermas 1994, 302). Habermas's work of the 1970s is exemplary in this regard, for even while he moved away from Marxism, the link between the objective and the normative that had characterized an earlier generation of stricter Marxists remained.

3. Marx makes clear the way in which the cunning of reason is expected, in his case, to operate materially and in a way comprehensible in terms of the science of political economy when, in volume one of *Capital*, he cites the relevant passage from Hegel in the context of a discussion of the earth, tools, and instruments as intermediaries between the worker and his object of labor. The sentences from Marx are:

An instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the worker interposes between himself and the object of his labour and which serves as a conductor, directing his activity onto that object. He makes use of the mechanical, physical and chemical properties of...
some substances as instruments of his power, and in accordance with his purposes. (285)

Marx then cites the following passage from Hegel:

Reason is as cunning as it is powerful. Cunning may be said to lie in the intermediative action which, while it permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away, and does not itself directly interfere in the process, is nevertheless only working out its own aims. (Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften in ihrer Abteilung Logik*, Berlin, 1840, p. 382) [Para. 209, Add. To From. English Translation: *Hegel's Logic*, trans. W. V. Wallace, rev. J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 272–73]

4. Hoy traces the origins of post-critique to certain readings of Nietzsche that emerged in French philosophy in the 1960s. The history of this movement, however, runs up to the present day and across the Atlantic.

5. This discourse, it must be admitted, draws partially on a discourse from inside the modern West itself—namely, Romanticism. Yet the originality of this moment in critical theory should not be underestimated, and the impact of this inversion of ethnology (see Foucault 1994, 373–87) has been massive. It has connected critical theory to multiculturality, environmentalism, and queer theory (to mention just a few); most impressive from a sociological perspective, it has enabled the investigation of forms of power in modern societies that were undetectable from the perspective of traditional political theory.

6. One can find these lines of opposition in debates about the basis for feminist theory (Benhabib et al. 1995), in the “science wars” brought to a head by the Sokal Hoax (Editors of *Lingua Franca* 2000), and in various debates in history and anthropology concerning the first encounters between the West and its others (Todorov 1999; Shillins 1995; Oneyesekere 1992; Said 1979).

REFERENCES


